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TAGS: [PREL](#) [RS](#) [GG](#) [PL](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIAN FM LAVROV OPEN TO MD CONFIDENCE-BUILDING
MEASURES WITH POLES

Classified By: DCM QUANRUD. REASON: 1.4 (D)

¶1. (C) The fact alone that FM Lavrov followed through on a planned visit to Warsaw September 11 spoke volumes about Russia's and Poland's ability to talk to each other despite major differences over Missile Defense (MD) and the Caucasus. The respectful atmospherics were as important as the visit's key deliverable, a commitment to pursue MD confidence-building measures at the deputy minister level. FM Sikorski's deft handling of the visit gives Sikorski a hat trick of recent diplomatic coups: his leadership during the Georgia crisis and in MD talks with the U.S. was also widely praised in Poland.

¶2. (C) Polish media described Sikorski and Tusk as tough but reasonable interlocutors for Lavrov. Sikorski publicly noted that he had told Lavrov that Russian generals should not make threatening statements aimed at Poland over MD. PM Tusk's Chief of Staff said Tusk had criticized Russian actions in Georgia and strongly supported that country's territorial integrity and sovereignty during his meeting with Lavrov. But the Poles balanced this toughness with an openness to Russian concerns. Sikorski said Polish predictability and transparency would reassure Moscow on MD, and acknowledged that his talks with Lavrov gave him a better understanding of Russian views, even on Georgia. Lavrov acknowledged that the posting of the U.S.-Polish MD agreement on the web was a good faith effort at transparency. Sikorski also joined Lavrov in opening and praising a bilateral Citizens Dialogue Forum.

¶3. (C) Commentators here detected a positive shift in Russian rhetoric. Former FM Rotfeld said that Russia no longer treats Poland as part of its sphere of influence, and that the MD issue need not obstruct a normal bilateral relationship. Lavrov seemed understanding concerning Polish participation in MD, while suggesting the Poles may be pawns of aggressive U.S. military strategy. One blemish on the atmospherics was a Gazeta Wyborcza article suggesting that Lavrov's op-ed in the same newspaper offered an ugly quid pro quo: Russia would accept MD and treat Poland like the long-time EU members in return for Poland ceasing its support for Georgia and respecting Russia's influence in the near abroad. In reality, Lavrov's piece seemed only a standard defense of Russian actions. However, Adam Rotfeld told reporters of previous Lavrov hints that bilateral understanding was possible if Poland accepted Russia's age-old interests in certain regions.

¶4. (C) The successful handling of the Lavrov visit gives the GoP a leg up in domestic political battles as well. Lavrov's apparent unwillingness to meet with President Kaczynski reinforces international impressions that Kaczynski is too reflexively anti-Russian to get a seat at the table on key occasions.

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